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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God of all grace, in the darkness of our limited knowledge, we turn to You for light. Illuminate the path of our Senators so that they may glorify You. Teach them to test all things by their conscience and always strive to do what is right. In these challenging times, strengthen their weakness, bring courage for cowardice and invincible faith for doubts. May they so live that their actions can withstand the scrutiny and judgment of posterity.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 4, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the tax extenders legislation. Today, we will continue to work through the remaining amendments to the bill. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled. There should be some this morning.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the American people are asking us to start over on health care. They are asking us to scrap the massive bills Democrats have been trying to force on them. They want us to focus on cost instead. That has been their clear message now for over a year. But yesterday Democrats in Washington said they know better. The President and his allies in Congress made up their minds to turn aside any pretense of bipartisanship and plow ahead on a partisan bill—a partisan bill, by the way, that Americans don't want. In a last-ditch effort to get their way, they have staked themselves to a flawed vision of reform over the wishes of the public. What is that vision? It is a vision of health care whereby the Federal Gov-

ernment would become more involved in the health care decisions of every man, woman, and child in America; where small businesses get hit with new job-killing taxes; where Medicare is slashed for millions of seniors, insurance premiums go up, and Federal taxpayers are required, for the first time ever, to cover the cost of abortions.

The administration and its allies in Congress have tried repeatedly to jam this vision of health care through Congress without success. Now they are doubling down. They have one more tool in their arsenal, and they are deploying it. Meanwhile, the American people are watching all this in utter disbelief. Americans do want reform, but they don't want this. They are fed up because the longer Democrats cling to their flawed vision of reform, the longer Americans have to wait for the reforms they really want, the longer they will have to wait for us to focus on jobs and the economy.

The President did a very good job of laying out the problem yesterday. But the heart of the problem, as he himself described it, is the high cost of care, and the simple fact is, the bill he wants doesn't lower cost. On the contrary, the administration's own experts say the Democratic plan increases cost. This alone should be reason enough to start all over and put together a list of commonsense, step-by-step reforms that will actually lower cost.

The good news is we already have the list. At last week's health care summit at the White House, both parties acknowledged a handful of reforms on which all of us could agree. That is where we should start, on the things on which we agree.

Unfortunately, even before the summit began, Democrats were already intent on pushing the same old version they were pushing before the summit by any means possible. They couldn't get the old version over the finish line, even with all the backroom deals, the kickbacks, and the buy-offs, so sometime after the Massachusetts election,

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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